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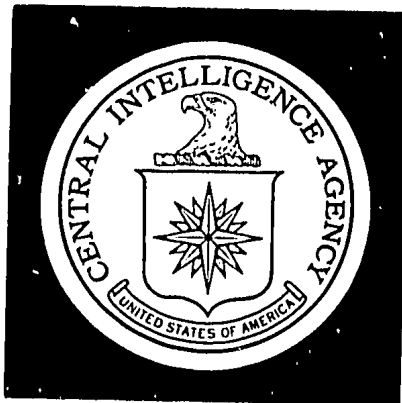
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

The Gaullists and the Communists-Polarity in French Politics?

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Nº 667

**23 April 1971
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THE GAULLISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS—POLARITY IN FRENCH POLITICS?

The Gaullists now appear to have a secure grip on France, but concern for the future has caused them to seek to broaden their base of support and to distribute responsibility for government by forming coalitions with other parties. The Communist Party (PCF), the best organized and most disciplined party in France, shows little ability to increase its vote and, like the Gaullists, is cultivating cooperation with other parties, in this case with the leftists.

The Gaullist Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR) holds the presidency and majority control of parliament, and its leaders are capable and popular. Nonetheless, the diverse political origins of the Gaullists and their opinions have led periodically to disunity within the party. Leaders who assembled this month for the spring session of parliament are vocally dissatisfied with the government and with each other. Lacking the political magic of De Gaulle, President Pompidou is having some difficulty keeping the party together. The UDR's tactic is to work with other parties of the center to create a grouping opposed to the parties of the left. To the extent that the Gaullists can point to such a polarity, they can claim that the voters have only the one choice—Gaullism or Communism.

The PCF can almost always count on capturing at least a fifth of the vote, but it is unlikely to enlarge that following greatly because of the continuing distrust of Communism by many Frenchmen. The PCF therefore sees association with other leftist parties as the best route to power, and it has been promoting such cooperation skillfully. If the Gaullist government loses its popularity, it is not impossible—although it is unlikely to occur soon—that a federation of the left that included the Communists could win a national election.

The municipal elections that took place in March provided an opportunity for both Gaullists and Communists to set patterns of cooperation with other parties. The results of the voting pointed toward stability rather than toward change, but they also tended to show that coalitions are valuable both on the right and the left and that the leftist parties, at least, are in danger of losing what power they have if they refuse to cooperate with the Communists. The elections have therefore encouraged the idea of polarity, and both Gaullists and Communists may expect to benefit.

The emergence of a durable two-party system, however, is improbable. The Gaullists endanger their party unity when they cooperate with non-Gaullist parties. The PCF, which also has its factions, is hindered by its ties with Moscow, which it is unlikely to strain unduly. These ties cast doubt on the independence and national allegiance of the PCF. Moreover, Soviet desires to cooperate with the French Government tend to cause the PCF to work with the Gaullists rather than to oppose them strongly. Although the parties in the middle are so disordered and splintered that, to keep alive, they need to join coalitions, even with the Gaullists or the Communists, they remain jealous of their independence and have not given up hope of achieving power in a coalition of their own.

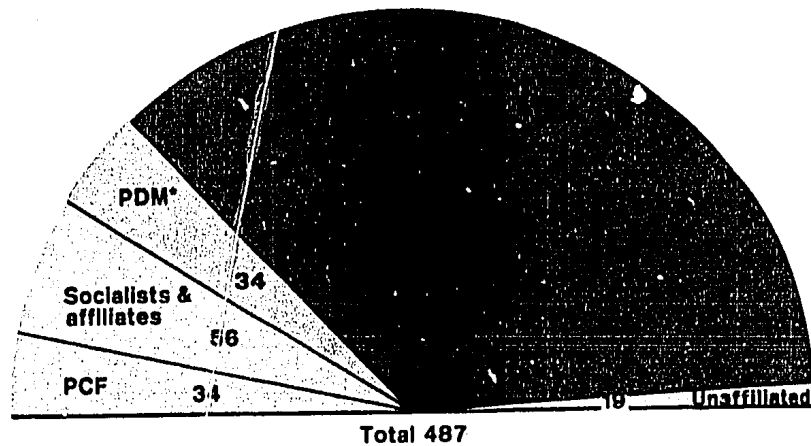
For the next few years, the Gaullists will probably have their way. For the longer term, the command of power in France will rest with a fickle electorate that is likely—in the face of social unrest—to vote for those who can convincingly offer stability.

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**PARTY STRENGTHS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
AS OF APRIL 1971
ELECTED JUNE 1968**



*Some of those in the PDM, but not all, vote regularly with the Gaullists and are considered part of the coalition.

 Parties included in government coalition

UDR Union of Democrats for the Republic
IR Independent Republicans
PDM Progress and Modern Democracy (Centrists)
PCF French Communist Party

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The Gaullists

The elections of June 1968, following the radical disturbances of May, gave the UDR control of the parliament, and the election a year later of Georges Pompidou to replace Charles de Gaulle as president affirmed and strengthened the party's control. The UDR had never before had such a large bloc in parliament; it had never before had a president who identified himself clearly with the party. No single party has ever been so powerful at the center of government in France.

But the UDR suffers significant weaknesses. A party of voters, rather than of members, it stands in recurrent danger of disintegrating into the heterogeneous elements that De Gaulle had pulled together. The politics of UDR adherents were defined in effect by the concepts that De Gaulle excluded: anarchism, Communism, Atlanticism, supranationalism. When party spokesmen now seek to define the positive legacy of De Gaulle, they agree only in their general sentiment for national prestige and progress and in their support for a strong executive authority.

As one left-wing leader of the party has explained, the big UDR group in parliament includes 30 to 40 on the right, 50 to 60 with "right-wing reflexes," 50 to 60 on the left, and 10 to 20 who are aligned behind the center-leftist ambitions of former minister Edgar Faure. President Pompidou's prime minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, appeals to a broad central group that stands between these groups on the right and the left and that looks toward social reform. All these different elements tend to keep their individuality, and a number of them have their own organizations, such as the Presence and Action of Gaullism, founded after the General's resignation in 1969 to maintain the purity of party traditions, or the Front for Progress, a group that has a leftist orientation.

Party cohesion over the past two years has resulted partly from Pompidou's success in bal-

ancing the different elements of the party and partly from the logic of self-interest. Although Pompidou is a cautious pragmatist who has more feel for style than for boldness of decision, he has kept his cabinet balanced between liberals and authoritarians, and has defined his policies in such general formulae as "order and progress" to ensure the support of most of the UDR. Because of the power vested in the president, who is elected for a seven-year term, and the relative weakness of parliament and the cabinet, fractious and ambitious party leaders hesitate to break with the Elysee. Their only opportunity for influence and position at this time is through Pompidou, and their only chance for future influence and position is through participation in the group that elects a new president. They have no practical alternative now but to support the UDR or one of the party groups allied to it—the Independent Republicans (IR) and a part of the Centrist party (PDM). Pompidou's policy of "ouverture" allows for coalitions with such parties in the center and center-left of the political spectrum and paves the way for alliances that the UDR may need after the next parliamentary elections, to be held by June 1973. It also helps the UDR to develop rapport with a broad group of potential adherents who can make a vital difference when the next presidential election comes around in 1976.

The municipal elections of March 1971 proved the value of the "ouverture" policy. Having failed in previous elections to establish an extensive presence and power at the local level, the UDR was most successful where it adopted flexible tactics of seeking and accepting alliances with local politicians most likely to win. Alliances with such traditional opponents as the Fourth Republic leader Pflimlin in Strasbourg and the long-exiled Gaullist apostate Soustelle in Lyons succeeded in placing the UDR on town councils where it was not in a position to take leadership against the left. In results that generally favored stability rather than change, the UDR succeeded in winning some power from the non-Communist left and in establishing in a number of regions a local presence more nearly in proportion to its national role.

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GENERAL ELECTIONS 1956 - 1968*

	Gaullists		Center Parties (MRP & Successor Parties)		Socialists and Radicals		Communists	
	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>
1956	1.1	5.1	2.4	11.1	5.6**	26.5**	5.5	25.9
1958	4.2	20.4	2.3	11.1	4.7	23.0	3.9	19.2
1962	6.6	36.3	1.6	8.9	3.7	20.1	4.0	21.7
1967	8.6	38.2	3.0	13.5	4.2	18.8	5.0	22.5
1968	10.2	46.0	2.7	12.2	3.6	16.5	4.4	20.0

**Excluding right-wing Radicals who ran separately

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 1965 AND 1969***1965**

	1st ballot		2nd ballot	
	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>
De Gaulle (UDR)	10.4	43.7	12.6	54.5
Mitterand (FGDS)	7.7	32.2	10.6	45.5
Lecanuet (Center)	3.8	15.8		

1969

	1st ballot		2nd ballot	
	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>	<u>votes</u>	<u>percent of votes</u>
Pompidou (UDR)	9.8	44.0	10.7	57.6
Pohér (Center)	5.2	23.4	7.9	42.4
Duclos (PCF)	4.8	21.5		
Defferre (PS)	1.1	5.1		

*Votes in millions

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Although the municipal elections showed varied results and often reflected purely local factors, the UDR does appear to be taking votes away from the far right and to be making progress toward forming at least local coalitions with parties or splinter groups in the center, ranging from elements properly called "conservative" to dissident groups of Socialists. They include some Radicals and those Centrists, led by the 1965 presidential candidate Lecanuet, who have not joined the Pompidou government. For these groups, the election results were mixed: the Radicals suffered the biggest losses of any party, and Lecanuet scored a personal triumph in Rouen. With the possible exception of the Radicals, who look primarily to the Socialists for partnership, these traditional groups appear to be in no immediate danger of extinction. In the next parliamentary elections they will be able to choose independent candidacies or coalitions with the UDR, and these in turn could lead to parliamentary cooperation on the model of those party groups that now share a role in the government.

The danger for the UDR is that, in broadening its appeal and cooperating with other parties in lasting alliances, it may lose its drive, its mystique, and above all its unity. Some of De Gaulle's most devoted followers, including those who formed the Presence and Action of Gaullism, have periodically shown concern about this problem. They have expressed uneasiness, for instance, at the compromise with the Centrists that is implicit in Pompidou's relatively positive and flexible Common Market policy. To such Gaullist diehards, who regard Gaullism as a progressive alternative to traditional capitalism, a UDR coalition with other parties of the right and center could signify contamination by traditional bourgeois concepts.

The preparation for the municipal elections brought these worries briefly to a head. In February, the new UDR Secretary General, Tomasini, voiced the sentiments of the Gaullist purists by expressing disapproval of alleged judicial leniency toward violent radicals and of Chaban-Delmas'

relatively liberal information policy, an issue on which Chaban is more in accord with the center and the non-Communist left than with Pompidou. Still more clearly demonstrative were the resignations from the Gaullist group in parliament of two prominent old Gaullist deputies, one of them De Gaulle's brother-in-law, in protest over the electoral alliance with Soustelle. Dissident Gaullist purists even ran a few separate—and very unsuccessful—local slates in the municipal elections.

Pompidou—as well as the majority of the UDR—appears to be convinced, however, that an emphasis on Gaullist purity with De Gaulle gone would result in a serious loss of popular support and a corresponding improvement of chances for a coalition on the left, including the Communists, to take power in France. Pompidou appears to think that the policy best calculated to keep the UDR in power would combine flexibility and inclusiveness, holding the UDR open to cooperation with other non-Communist parties while continuing to stress heavily the Gaullist objectives of order and progress. Despite the centrifugal forces that may ultimately prevail, the UDR will probably cohere and dominate the scene for the next few years, forming alliances as necessary for elections and for effective government.

The Communists

Between 1965 and 1968, the dominant competition in French politics was that between the UDR and Francois Mitterrand's Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left (FGDS), a non-Communist alliance of the left that the Communists were generally prepared to support. The FGDS fell apart after the disturbances of May 1968 and the ensuing parliamentary elections that set back all the leftist parties. Despite efforts now under way to reconcile the non-Communist parties of the left, they are internally so divided and so uncertain of holding their followers that the disciplined and aggressive PCF has an exceptional opportunity to win their cooperation.

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The PCF has recovered from the severe setbacks it suffered during De Gaulle's first years in power. Its membership, estimated at 260,000 to 280,000, remains constant in number and far exceeds the membership of any other French party. What is more important, its activists, estimated at about 60,000, are hard working and loyal. Furthermore, although anti-Communism remains strong in France, opinion polls suggest that a majority of the French electorate sees a useful role for the PCF on the political scene and would be prepared to accept a Communist presence in a future cabinet, at least—as in De Gaulle's first government at the end of the war—in ministries that have solely technical responsibilities.

Election results that consistently give the PCF 20 to 25 percent of the vote indicate both the strength and weakness of the Communists' political situation: they are fairly sure of holding what they have, but they are unlikely to get within striking distance of direct government power except by alliance with other parties. Recognizing the logic of these circumstances, and determined for reasons of party image and sentiment and of international policy to maintain a constitutional approach to power, the PCF has more or less consistently sought to arrange electoral alliances with other parties of the left. In 1965, in the combined left's most notable effort since World War II, its presidential candidate Mitterrand won 45.5 percent of the runoff ballot against De Gaulle. Other election results, however, suggest that a leftist federation would not normally win such a high percentage of the vote.

The PCF is inhibited by external and internal factors from taking full advantage of its present opportunities. Its tie to Moscow often causes the party to emphasize short-term international Communist objectives over long-term aims of improving its position on the national scene. On the other hand, to the extent that the PCF cooperates with the moderate left, it exposes its members to the suasions of the Maoist and Trotskyite revolutionaries who have emerged since 1968 on the far left and who view the PCF as a prop of the established order.

Disputes have developed within the PCF over the cautious policies of the party both in asserting independence from Moscow and in seeking to create a broad basis for PCF influence in France. A number of party leaders have wanted the PCF to condemn Soviet errors, to enter into a bold dialogue with left-wing Catholics and other non-Communist supporters of social reform, and to make an effort to move toward power through nonparliamentary channels.

During 1970, the party dealt with these problems in a characteristically ambivalent manner. First it expelled the chief proponent of independent views, Roger Garaudy, and then it adopted, in modified form, some of the tactics he recommended. In November, the acting secretary general of the party, Georges Marchais, in an unprecedented interview with the independent Catholic newspaper *La Croix*, proposed cooperation between Communist and Christian workers. Also the party has tried to give the impression that it is not under Moscow's thumb by making gestures such as emphasizing its disapproval of the Leningrad hijackers' trial and by speaking out against any possible Soviet intention to revive the cult of Stalin.

Nothing is more alien to our ideal than regimented Communism, the drabness of a society in which differences in taste and aptitude would be leveled or in which thought itself would be cloaked in uniform.

There are now 14 socialist states. Each one manifests its own idiosyncrasies in the construction of a new society. If the experience of each of them is of inestimable value for all the others—and for ourselves—it is also true that not one of them can constitute a model for the others to emulate, a model within which their futures can be shaped.

PCF Acting Secretary General Georges Marchais,
in a speech to an international colloquy on the
50th anniversary of the founding of the PCF,
3 November 1970

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Although the PCF has been flirting with attitudes of disapproval for Soviet deeds over the past ten years, its position in recent months comes close enough to endangering relations with the Soviets to represent a step toward some genuine independence. The PCF put forward this position most clearly and emphatically during the Moscow party congress this month when it publicly and explicitly rejected the Brezhnev doctrine of the limited sovereignty of Communist countries. Although the PCF will not wish to provoke the Soviets to exert financial or ideological pressures, its present posture implies that the majority of PCF leaders are determined to free the party enough so that it can give—and make evident that it is giving—more wholehearted devotion to “French considerations.”

The party has also been making a strong effort to provide itself with a new image in other ways. It has opened cell meetings to coverage by television; it has held public discussions at which it has answered all questions freely; and Marchais even conducted an extemporaneous radio discussion with Mitterrand by telephone.

The activities of the past winter were aimed at the municipal elections in March. These elections are always of special importance for the opportunities they offer the PCF to win the power to exhibit model administration by Communist mayors. The PCF has held a number of mayoralties since the 1920s, and its record of administration has generally been good. The elections this year provided the occasion to work toward cooperation with the non-Communist left, following a pattern that the PCF had pursued with limited success in the last such elections six years ago.

In extended discussions with the Socialist Party (PS), the PCF resumed previous efforts to set a basis both for electoral agreements and for collaboration in a future government. The provisional results, published in December, included a long list of agreed positions and a short but important list of unresolved problems. The latter

included the question of cooperation and integration with other Western countries and the key domestic issue of democracy after victory: the PCF would agree to the continued existence of different parties, but it tries to avoid an explicit promise to give up power if the “socialist” government should be voted out. The PCF seems to have compromised about as much as it could; the Socialists have kept their distance by announcing that the agreement has no formal status.

The PCF was most aggressive in seeking specific electoral arrangements, particularly with the Socialists. At the same time it sought to limit its potential partners by drawing a firm line against cooperation with the Maoists and the Trotskyites or with the PDM or Gaullists, parties on the left and the right of a potential leftist federation. The negotiations resulted in cooperative electoral agreements in many more cities than in the last such elections. Although the results of the elections themselves brought only limited rewards to the PCF, they confirmed the viability of the party's tactics by proving that the PCF and the Socialists were most successful where they were united. Important Socialist mayors who did not choose to join forces with Communists, for instance, found that they needed Communist help in the runoffs in order to stay in office. Those Socialists who oppose cooperation with the Communists will now find their position more difficult to sustain.

The PCF's immediate ambition is restricted. However successful it is, through confident self-assertion and tactical skill, in establishing a role in a united left, distrust of the Communists by the non-Communist parties of the left and among French voters generally probably will remain strong enough to keep the party from achieving open leadership of such a coalition. The PCF must therefore attempt to use the Socialists as a front behind which to win influence and ultimate power. Although desiring that the moderate leftist parties be strong and useful allies, the PCF must also want them to be weak enough so that it can set conditions for cooperation in parliament and in a later bid for presidential power.

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The PCF is making progress, however. It is having some success in presenting itself as a responsible, constitutional party independent of foreign control, and as a reliable, useful electoral ally of the non-Communist left. In placing itself in a position to take advantage of any change of voter sentiment away from the government, however, the PCF's position is further complicated by its ambiguous relations with the UDR-dominated government itself, for beneath surface antagonisms there are undercurrents of understanding.

The Communists and the Gaullists

The PCF and the UDR constantly attack each other on ideological grounds, but they have often had more in common with each other than with other parties as regards some important aspects of policy. In foreign affairs particularly the PCF, like Moscow, has been satisfied with Gaullist policies in most major matters, and despite some modifications of French positions that have occurred since Pompidou took power, it is exceptional for the PCF to speak out against the government. In January 1971, when the PCF criticized the government for aligning France too clearly with the US, West Germany, and the Common Market, it referred to Pompidou's "commitments" to Moscow, evidently hoping to influence French policy. PCF efforts to reach agreement with the government on foreign policy are reciprocated implicitly by elements within the UDR. Gaullists who have founded the Movement for the Independence of Europe—an organization that has also won leftist supporters—tries to persuade the government to stand by foreign policy views that accord with those of De Gaulle—and of the PCF.

In some fundamentals of domestic policy, too, differences between the UDR and the PCF are more theoretical than practical, for both the parties include large elements that desire order

and stability more than change. This type of conservatism on the part of the PCF tends to stand in the way, for instance, of PCF cooperation with radical Catholic groups.

At times in the past, it has been clear that the PCF was supporting the Gaullists for reasons of international policy, and in the desperate days of May 1968, the PCF in effect helped to keep the rebellious students and workers apart and to prevent the spread of disorder. It would seem that on a number of occasions in recent years the Gaullists were able to make deals with the PCF—or with the Soviets—to maintain favorable features of foreign policy in exchange for PCF help in ensuring social tranquility or for its tacit agreement not to provide electoral backing for popular Centrist candidates. Such silent cooperation would become more difficult to the extent that the two parties took a leading role in two mutually exclusive electoral alliances.

Although the attitudes that the UDR and the PCF hold in common would be no impediment to a genuine two-party system, the two parties are unlikely to be able soon to overcome the difficulties that stand in the way of such a system. Both parties appear to lack sufficient assurance about dealing with internal factions, and the PCF cannot cut the tie to Moscow. Although the other parties are prepared to form coalitions of convenience, they prefer a multi-party system in which such alliances do not result in the lasting dominance of one or two parties. These parties have not given up hope that the right leader will be able to take advantage of voter disenchantment with the government and bring them to power in a coalition of their own. Nonetheless, for the next few years, the UDR will probably continue to dominate the scene, while the PCF will form electoral alliances without being able to gather the other leftist parties lastingly around it.

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